

# PROLOGUE

TO MR. FOOTE'S COMEDY, CALLED, THE

## AUTHOR,

To be spoken on SATURDAY the 8th instant, by

MR. BROWN

For the BENEFIT of Mrs. LOVE.

Severe their task, who in this critic age,  
With fresh materials furnish out the stage!  
Not that our fathers drain'd the comic store,  
Fresh characters spring up as heretofore.—  
Nature and novelty does still abound;  
On every side fresh follies may be found.  
But then the taste of every guest to hit,  
To please at once the box, the gallery, and pit,  
Requires at least no common share of wit.

Those who adorn the orb of higher life  
Demand the lively rake, or modish wife;  
Whilst they who in a lower circle move  
Yawn at their wit, and slumber at their love.  
If light, low mirth employs the comic scene,  
Such mirth as drives from vulgar minds the spleen;  
The polish'd critic damns the wretched stuff,  
And cries, " 'twill please the galleries well enough."  
Such jaring judgements who can reconcile?  
Since fops will frown, where humble traders smile.

To dash the poets ineffectual claim,  
And quench his thirst for universal fame,  
The Grecian fabulist, in moral lay,  
Has thus address'd the writers of this day:

Once on a time, a son and sire, we're told,  
The stripling tender, and the father old,  
Purchas'd a Jack-ass at a country fair,  
To ease their limbs, and hawk about their ware:

But as the sluggish animal was weak,  
They fear'd, if both should mount, his back wou'd break:  
Up gets the boy; the father leads the ass,  
And through the gazing crowd attempts to pass;  
Forth from the throng the grey beards hobble out,  
And hail the cavalcade with feeble shout.  
"This the respect to reverend age you show?"  
"And this the duty you to parents owe?"  
"He beats the hoof, and you are set astride;"  
"Sirrah! get down and let your father ride."  
As Grecian lads were seldom void of grace,  
The decent duteous youth resign'd his place.  
Then a fresh murmur thro' the rabble ran,  
Boys, girls, wives, widows, all attack the man.  
"Sure never was brute beast so void of nature!"  
"Have you no pity for the pretty creature?"  
"To your own baby can you be unkind?"  
"Here Suke, Bill, Betty—put the child behind."  
Old Dapple next, the clowns compassion claim'd;  
"'Tis wonderment, them boobies ben't ashamed:"  
"Two at a time upon a poor dumb beast!"  
"They might as well have carry'd he at least."  
The pair still pliant to the partial voice,  
Dismount and bear the Ass—Then what a noise—  
Huzzas—loud laughs, low gibe, and bitter joke,  
From the yet silent sire, these words provoke,  
"Proceed, my Boy, nor heed their farther call,  
"Vain his attempt, who strives to please them all!"